

Hillsdale Airport Advisory Committee

Minutes

Hillsdale Airport Advisory Committee

January 21, 2017

The members of the Hillsdale Airport Advisory Committee met on January 21, 2017.

The following members were present: Rich Péwé, Roy Szarafinski, Curt Sarles, Brad Lowrey, and Quinton Lockwood. Jason Walters was present as Airport Manager.

The meeting was called to order by chairperson, Rich Péwé.

The recorded minutes of the September 17, 2016 meeting were not placed before the Committee as requested by the Chairman. It was determined they would be sent to members via email for approval.

Unfortunately, there was no progress report made to City Council in 2016.

The two new members of the Committee, Brad Lowrey and Quinton Lockwood, were welcomed.

Jason Walters, Airport Manager, gave the following report:

- a. Jason introduced Todd Korn with Skyhigh Aviation Solutions, LLC. Todd is a pilot and a skilled/licensed mechanic. The Airport has been struggling to find a skilled mechanic. This was identified as a weakness and a threat on the SWOT analysis. Todd is relocating back to Hillsdale which will also bring another business and skilled services. This will make the Airport more attractive to current and future boarders and bring in more visitors.
- b. Jason has pursued and received Avfuel branding which provides many advantages. To get the branding, the airport must meet certain standards. The Avfuel name is the first indication to pilots that the facility is up to standards. The specific advantages are the following: increases credibility; available fuel discounts; a way to increase the base tenant program; the ability to get certain jet parts and fuel when needed; single point fueling; marketing of the airport in all Avfuel publications; and the Hillsdale Airport will show up on the Avfuel fuel locator. There is no obligation to the City for this two-year branding agreement.
- c. Jason met with Randy Coller with the Michigan Aeronautics Commission (MAC) within the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Hillsdale Municipal Airport has received a glowing report from the MAC about safety and operations improvements.
- d. The Hillsdale Municipal Airport recently received approval for \$800,000 of state funds from Governor Snyder and the MAC/MDOT for a much needed new aircraft apron. The funding was awarded after MAC/MDOT became aware that the current apron was not safe for heavy aircraft, thus preventing required services after landing. The City of Hillsdale issued an RFP last fall, but the bids came in a little high. The City of Hillsdale recently re-bid the project and much more favorable bids were received. The apron will be paid for with federal and state funds which include the airport's annual entitlement funds. The City's financial responsibility should be well under 10% of the total project cost. There is already corporate interest in building

- hangars after the new apron is completed. The new apron is a critical next step to propelling the development of Hillsdale Municipal Airport to become financially self-sufficient.
- e. As a safety measure, snow flags have been installed on the runway lights.
  - f. There will be a volunteer day on April 9th. The goal is to have a few volunteer days each year. Most likely, the goal will be to help clean up the fence area along Lake Pleasant Road as requested by Adams Township or potentially help clean-up the hangars. More information forthcoming.
  - g. The antenna was removed as it was no longer useful.
  - h. As a safety measure, the airport lighting was updated using ADB Airfield Solutions, but the lighting still does not sync with the phone. More work is needed to have the syncing work as intended.
  - i. He shared newer conceptual renderings of the proposed terminal and hangers. The committee was reminded that nothing was set in stone.

Rich Péwé asked if there were any comments about the draft of the strategic plan document the Vision Committee made available for review and comment. Curt Sarles and Quinton Lockwood expressed that there needs to be a clearer business plan as they don't understand how the creation of a destination terminal will achieve the needed income to sustain the types of facilities that are being proposed. Curt Sarles expressed his reservations about Hillsdale being thought of as destination. Jason Walters expressed concern that we could become a regional hub. There was also a question about the feasibility or marketability of constructing housing on or near the airport. In response to the business planning question, Jason Walters indicated the executive hangars would be built with private money; ideally the facilities would be endowed by private donations; the money made from the flowage fee from new traffic would increase revenue (at it is, there are weeks where \$30,000 in fuel is sold); T-hanger leases would provide income; City leases for other business to rent hangar space; and the presence of executive aircrafts may generate enough revenue to pay for fixed costs and make revenue for the City. It was generally agreed that the strategy needed a clearer business plan component that would be less reliant on transforming the City's airport into a destination airport and more specific to how the airport could operate independent of City funding.

There was discussion about how to make the social media site more effective. Brad Lowry is going to review the website for what we have been trying to do and will be making some recommendations.

Public comment: remarks about the need to re-elect a new Chairman as it was resolved by the committee more than a year ago that the Chairman would serve for only one year; that the minutes for the September meeting had not been approved or put before City Council; that the Council had not been given a progress report at the end of 2016; that since Rich Péwé became chair, seemingly the council no longer wants to be updated about the airport.

Rich Péwé indicated to the Committee that a new chairman would indeed need to be elected. There was discussion and understanding that essentially there would be no chairman until a new chair was elected at the next meeting.

Roy Szarafinski made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Brad Lowry and the motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Rich Pewe.